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By Claud L. Chilton

Delivered before the

Woman's Auxiliary of the

Southern Commercial Congress

Mobile, Alabama

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A Memorial Address on

JOHN TYLER MORGAN

Madam President and Ladies:

My business is that of persuading gallant ships to pass through a canal that connects the two great oceans of Time and Eternity—a canal that was dug by the holiest of hands at the price of His own heart's blood; and it is somewhat out of my element to appear in such a role as this; but your very kind President, Eve-like, over-persuaded me, and made it appear, in spite of my protestations to the contrary, that the good women of the Convention would listen to my story and that it would be no violation of propriety that a kinsman of Senator Morgan should say somewhat in his praise. Indeed, I myself have reckoned that to be but sorry modesty which hesitates to burnish a great name, lest the reflected lustre should fall upon one's own hand; and so I will venture to say what my time will allow as to the relation of John T. Morgan to the Panama Canal, and the present duty of making his name glorious in connection with it by achieving the great aims which he so ardently and assiduously cherished, rather than by encomiums upon his statesmanship.

I happen to know by personal conversation and correspondence, more of Senator Morgan's views and hopes regarding this great enterprise than appears to the public; and one thing I am assured of: that he pursued this great work from motives of the *purest patriotism.*

Whatever may be said of any great accomplishment, no achievement can be so great as the motive which gave it birth and impetus.

It was a pure and lofty patriotism that stirred the heart of the great-souled Morgan—a true faith that dared to believe that possible which precedent had called impossible, and to see in vision the things that are not as though they were.

John T. Morgan was a great lawyer and a great statesman, but he was a greater *patriot*—a real lover of his country. This over-ruling passion evinced itself in all his military and civic career, and I am sure if his great spirit could be present today and hear the encomiums heaped upon his name, he would perhaps be pleased with nothing that might be said of him so much as what your humble speaker has said of him elsewhere—who, in speaking to his own bereaved Alabama, laid this wild flower on his bier:

> "From the mountains to the sea,
> Counting all thy children o'er—
> None e'er lived more true than he,
> Nor lived that *loved thee, Mother, more.*"

Patriotism is like fire; it is enkindled and burns the fiercer as the breath of the oppressor endeavors to extinguish it. It sheds its gentle and holy light upon the hearthstone in the home of peace when "The twilight meets the plaintive whip-poor-will;" but when the cold and cruel blast of oppression stirs the smouldering embers, it leaps into a conflagration whose fiery tongues lick the stars of heaven and sear the deathless names of heroes and patriots into the adamant of endless ages!

There are, as I take it, four epochs in the life of John T. Morgan in which his patriotism, developed by the winds of oppression, sprang into heroic action.

The first was *when his country was invaded,* and it was proposed to cut by the edge of the sword, the most sacred cords which ever bound Sovereigns to a solemn troth.

Called on to take part in the Secession Convention, he signed his name to the ordinance which declared the sovereign inde-

pendence of the Confederate States; and the echoes of the first bugle blast had not died in solemn hush upon the hills and valleys of Alabama when, as a private, he marched to the front, and bared his breast to the storm of death in defense of the rights of his country under the Constitution. The fact of his return to his home at the end of a four years struggle, with the commission of a Brigadier General, and a spotless escutcheon, proved the first trial and triumph of his patriotism.

The second epoch which I note, is the great political emergency which called him to the hustings to fight a battle no less fierce than the first.

This State had been nominally received back into the Union, but under a régime—unparalleled in the annals of civilization—a horde of consciousless harpies had been loosed upon the prostrate form of a helpless and defenseless people—a people whose great Lee had surrendered under the pledge of real peace—a horde of consciousless harpies, I say, to strip the slain of what had been left after the unspeakable horrors of Sherman and his like.

Under this régime, all the horrors of which history will never utter, this State with others had become absolutely bankrupt. A debt of multiplied millions of dollars had been created—the principal of which was pocketed (by the most daring yeggmen that ever sand-bagged a hapless traveler) by means of the newly enfranchised and ignorant blacks—the interest of which was kindly entailed upon the coming generations of the innocent and unborn.

The cash gone, the credit gone, the interest eating like a vulture on the vitals, the Legislature composed of consciousless whites and ignorant blacks, the State faced utter and irremediable ruin. There was only one thing to do—this flock of harpies had to be swept off the face of the earth and the Capitol, like the Augean stables, had to be cleansed.

At this critical juncture, in 1874, John T. Morgan volunteered his services, and leaving his business and home, and forgetting every other consideration, he went out into the hills and mountains of North Alabama, and throughout the State, with an eloquence born of desperation, and by this means, more than by the efforts of any other one man, overthrew the horde of our oppressors, and saved the State from a ruin more terrible than war. This was the second trial and triumph of his patriotism.

In recognition of his most eminent service in this crisis, he was elected to the United States Senate without an opposing vote,—the first and only office which he ever held and which he held and adorned for over thirty years.

As Ambassador of the State of Alabama to the Government of the United States, he was as true and loyal to the United States Government as he had been always to his own State, and in the delicate and most responsible of all positions in the Senate —that of Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations—he rendered signal service to his country in its contests with the world-powers, and, as he had always done, stood steadfast and unmovable for the just claims and sovereign rights of the United States as against all the world.

In his place as United States Senator, he was called to meet the third great emergency in his public life. The Republican Party, in perfect consistency with its avowed purpose, not only to free the negroes but to see to it that they should exercise the franchise which it had so unwisely conferred upon them, (a consummation that would have fastened upon the South forever the shackles of commercial, political and moral ruin), was about to pass the so-called "Force Bill," of infamous memory, in which it was proposed to send United States troops throughout the South to guard the polls and to see to it that the negroes were allowed to vote—of course, with the understanding that they were to vote the Republican ticket.

This emergency sprang Morgan to action more quickly, if possible, than did the tocsin of war, and he made up his mind that he was going to throw himself into the breach and apply the only remedy that remained, and speak until *he fell or the bill died. The bill died!* He threw his whole soul and mind and body into this heroic struggle and made a speech which will go down in political history as one of the greatest achievements since the days of Horatius. The South will never know from what a doom it was saved by that heroic action.

But while his conspicuous service evinced his fidelity to and pride in the whole country, he felt that he had a special call to serve his own Southland and his own State.

Call it provincialism and sectionalism if you please, but it is true, nevertheless, that there can be no true patriotism without a hearthstone, no real love of country which can glory in the prosperity of a federal commonwealth whose riches are amassed at the expense of the poverty of one's own race, his section, his State, his family and his home. It is unthinkable that any man can love the *whole* country, who, at the same time, acquiesces in the wrongs and condones the injustices,—the limitations and handicaps which a more prosperous majority of another section may have forged and fastened upon his own people. Where one's section is involved, a partriotism cannot exist which is not "sectional," and he is the greatest lover of his race who is most sensitive to his own honor and most chivalrous in defense of his own hearthstone.

I say this, because I desire to emphasize the fact, that in the undertaking of an isthmian canal, Senator Morgan was not only impelled by the desire to benefit his country as a whole, but he was moved by the patriotic impulse to benefit his beloved Southland especially.

This stupendous undertaking constituted the fourth great epoch in his public life, and its achievement was the climacteric event in his useful and honorable career.

He realized clearly and felt deeply the fact that for fifty years the people of the once proud and commanding South had been the industrial slaves of the North. Under the policy which the Republican Party dictated, and Republican money brought to pass, the South had been under the incubus of conditions which doomed it to poverty, conditions which shut it up to the necessity of exporting all its products as raw material and of importing all its supplies of almost every character from other sections, paying the manufacturer's legitimate profit, plus the protective tariff, plus the jobber's profit, plus the banker's interest, plus the freight both ways, plus the local freight from the point of distribution to the place of sale, plus the retailer's profit, plus the interest on the mortgage to pay for it all out of the raw material when it should be brought to market!

Under such conditions, if the South had not been the fairest spot the sun ever shone upon, if the negro had not been the happiest race that ever lived on nothing, if the white people of the South had not possessed such wonderful resiliency, our commercial bones would have lain bleaching in the sun long ago.

There was one way out—*only one way.* That way was to *dig a canal across the Isthmus of Darien, which would give the South the advantage in the race for the Orient, the future great market of the world.*

Heretofore our cotton, timber and iron had to go North to be manufactured into the finished product, and thence it was transported across the continent by rail, or over the Panama Railway at great expense, or through the Strait of Magellan. Senator Morgan foresaw that an Isthmian Canal would change all this, our Southern material would be manufactured on Southern soil and shipped direct to the Orient at a saving of two thousand miles in freight.

Against this great project there were five great obstacles; the trans-contentinental railways, the New England Manufacturer, the New York Capitalists, Northern prejudice and the

fact of French failure. Under such odds the idea was scouted, ridiculed, pronounced Utopian. But with that dauntless courage and determination which he had always displayed, Senator Morgan kept on his way. For twenty long years he kept on at it. With tongue and pen, year in and year out he persisted. Gradually he overcame prejudice and party spirit, he attacked first one and then another of the opposing conditions. When failure seemed imminent he redoubled his energy, when hope was deferred he still fought on. You know the rest. A few days ago the President touched a key,—the last obstruction was blown away and the waters of the stormy Atlantic mingled in swirling currents with those of the great sister Ocean of Peace, and *the South is forever free!* Her commercial captivity and industrial slavery is at an end. Her shackles of a protective (for the North) tariff fell from her hands a few weeks ago; the legislation which will prevent the domination of Wall Street will unbind her feet tomorrow; the greatest markets of the world will be opened for her when the first Southern-made goods in American bottoms will pass through the great canal, and then, when, like the man at the beautiful gate of the Temple of old, under the touch of our great statesman the South will be walking and leaping and praising God,—with her face to the glowing East and the fire of a new youth in her eye, as she launches her barque into the yielding waves of the Pacific, she will remember her benefactor and throw back a kiss of love to the memory of John Tyler Morgan!

Columbus in discovering America did little else than to bring an unknown continent into view, but that was enough, and his name will be linked with its greatness to the last syllable of recorded time.

John T. Morgan in his heroic struggles and persistent labor to promote the Isthmian Canal only brought it into practical possibility, but his name will live in the glory of our emancipated Southland and in the broader commerce of the whole wide world.

as long as waves shall clap their hands and genius and patriotism are regarded by mankind.

The Panama Canal has brought the South at last into its own. It has come to pass that *her sun has risen in the East!*—may it go down no more forever!

> As long as stars shall shine and rivers flow,
> Among the stars her sovereign states shall glow,
> Till future ages shall her praise repeat,
> And list'ning nations crowd around her feet.

I cannot appropriately or conscientiously close these remarks without one thought more—the noble life and character of this great man was moulded at the knee of the saintliest of mothers; and along with the great ideals which she planted in his young heart was the white rose of the utmost reverence for womanhood, and especially the high ideals of Southern womanhood.

I intend no invidious comparisons when I say that I believe that the ideal of American womanhood, and especially the ideal of ante-bellum Southern womanhood, has seldom been equalled—certainly never been surpassed in the world. To maintain that high ideal was an ambition out-ruling all else in Morgan's heart. He knew that—

> "Ill fares the land—to hastening ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates and *men* decay,"

and it was his most cherished ambition to preserve intact the glorious traditions, virtues, and supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon in the South. That supremacy no matter how great our commercial prosperity, cannot outlast our *real worth*—the nobility of our men and the purity of our women. It is written, "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them." It is most difficult—

I may say almost impossible, not to be commercialized by Commerce.

The glorious civilization developed in this country—in New England by the Puritans—(and Mary Chilton was among the first)—among the Cavaliers in Virginia and the Huguenots in the Carolinas—had for its substratum the God-fearing, heaven-typed *home,* presided over by a God-fearing heaven-faced woman. These people and their children stood the privations and hardships of frontier life, the tomahawk of the savage; they have come up out of the fiercest and bloodiest conflicts which history ever recorded *sans peur et sans reproche,* they have withstood the pinchings of poverty and the injustices which have been heaped upon them for fifty years—their honor all unsullied:—shall we brave the horrors of war and the rigor of hard bondage to be felled by the velvet touch of Mammon? God forbid!

The commercializing of woman would usher the black shadow of our National eclipse. Our American Eagle has two wings—one, Commerce and one, Character. To wound either is to fall.

The greatest asset of any country is its people, and the chief conservator of all that is worthy is found in its women. May we, in our outlook for a greater future, preserve this, the best of all the past—the purest of womanhood, and while the black smoke of grim and grimy Commerce pours from the funnels of our trans-Pacific steamers may the beautiful face of the saintliest of womanhood adorn the prow of every one of them and kiss the spray of every parting wave.